DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 428 004 SO 029 596

AUTHOR Engel, Michael
TITLE The Meanings of Civic Education: Theoretical Perspectives on Classroom Practice.
PUB DATE 1998-09-04
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Boston, MA, September 3-6, 1998).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship; *Citizenship Education; *Civics; *Democracy; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Political Issues; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Civic Values; Dewey (John); Equality (Social)

ABSTRACT

This paper claims that if educators are to make logical and consistent decisions about what methods of civic education they wish to employ, a debate over the goals of civic education needs to be apparent. The meanings of concepts that are at the heart of any civic education curriculum are in fact themselves contested. Much has been written about different kinds of democracy, such as "strong" versus "weak," or "liberal" versus "participatory republican." For the most part, however, the implications of these distinctions have not been thoroughly examined. Citizenship is the most significantly contested concept, and conservative and transformative perspectives offer radically different answers. Civic education conservatives are not as concerned with the ends of political decision-making as they are with the means. The conservative perspective on civic education has managed to forge a strong, well-financed, and prominent coalition drawing on right, center, and left in U.S. political life to promote an agenda based on strengthening civil society. A transformative perspective is characterized by a specific commitment to a Deweyan concept of democracy as an all-encompassing way of life, a more egalitarian social and economic system, and what might be called the "richness of difference" in gender, race, and ethnicity. Civic education in this context would be explicitly oriented towards teaching students how to search for better alternatives to the present political and economic system which has failed to achieve these goals. If a choice is going to be made as to what makes sense in civic education on any level, including higher education, all the options should be considered. (Contains 57 references.) (BT)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 428 004

The Meanings of Civic Education:
Theoretical Perspectives on Classroom Practice

Michael Engel
Department of Political Science
Westfield State College
Westfield, Massachusetts

SO 029 596

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael Engel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association
Boston, Mass., September 4, 1998

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Not too long ago, most political scientists saw low voter turnout and apathy among the masses as positive benefits to the political system. Nonparticipation among the young, poor, and less-educated was considered functional toward maintaining a stable democracy.

All this has changed. Democracy is now seen to be threatened by too *little* public involvement, which raises questions about the legitimacy of the system and its ability to respond to social and economic changes (Elshtain 1995; Lasch 1995; Greider 1992; Hudson 1995). Thus the demand for more and better civic education has gained prominence on the policy agendas of many politicians, educators, and social scientists. The need to develop the values, knowledge, and skills required for democratic citizenship, especially among young people, has taken on greater urgency and received considerable public attention.

It is not coincidental that this has occurred at a time when education reform has once again become a critical national issue. Indeed, both are being discussed and debated in much the same way: a crisis is perceived, a common national interest is said to be threatened, commissions are formed, the media becomes involved, and solutions--especially those with the promise of a quick fix--are offered from all sides. Thus most of the literature on school reform as well as civic education adopts a practical and empirical approach. Philosophical and ideological debates are put aside in favor of seeking out whatever appears to work. In the case of education reform, for example, market ideology is the unchallenged context of policy development for the first time in the history of educational politics. Student achievement towards increased economic productivity is accepted as the primary goal of public education, and reforms are measured--literally--in terms of how they reach that goal.

Similarly, much of the discussion about civic education assumes that we are all more or less committed to maintaining democracy (however we may define that term), and that active citizenship and political participation are desirable as both means and

ends. In short, the belief seems to be that we are all in the same boat, rowing in the same general direction, divided only by differences in the course we wish to take.

I believe this consensus is artificial and illusory, much as it is in the broader area of education reform, because it represents only the ideas of a conservative intellectual and political elite. The direction of civic education depends on whether we want to educate young people to preserve the existing system (a "conservative" perspective), or to transform it (a "transformative" perspective). An explicit choice has to be made, but most contemporary discussions of civic education have avoided it. As a result, the conservative perspective predominates by default. But if we are to make logical and consistent decisions about what methods of civic education we wish to employ, a debate over the goals of civic education needs to be opened up. That is the purpose of this paper.

The meanings of concepts that are at the heart of any civic education curriculum are in fact themselves contested. Of course, much has been written about different kinds of democracy, such as "strong" versus "weak" (Barber 1984), or "liberal" versus "participatory republican" (Battistoni 1985), among other kinds. For the most part, however, the implications of these distinctions for civic education have not been thoroughly examined. If we are to educate "strong" democrats, for example, do we limit their activities to government, or do we, as John Dewey urged, extend it to economics? If we want to encourage greater participation in political life, do keep it within the proper channels or give it free rein? Is democracy a set of rules to be followed in the political process, or, again to cite Dewey, should it be an all-encompassing way of life? How much democratic participation is possible within limits of the existing system? And, for that matter, is the existing system worth preserving?

Citizenship is the most significant contested concept. Is it a set of obligations and responsibilities attached to the circumstance of having been born in a certain place, or does it mean a set of values that transcend national boundaries? Is a good citizen an

individual with a certain supply of knowledge and skills, or is it a particular way of thinking and behaving, or both? Do we practice citizenship only in "public life," or does it also extend to private life? Does citizenship imply that there is some kind of common interest that underlies our competing political interests? If so, what are we to do with persistent dissent from that alleged commonality? If not, how do we build a cohesive society?

These are questions to which conservative and transformative perspectives offer radically different answers. For the most part, however, they are unexamined in the mainstream literature on civic education--or, more to the point, the answers are assumed to be a matter of consensus. There is a need, then, to explore the alternatives.

I must add a cautionary note to my use of the term "conservative" to define one of the perspectives on civic education. It is meant here to define the commitment to conserve a particular system; it by no means implies a correlation with political conservatism of the Milton Friedman-Newt Gingrich variety. Indeed, one finds enemies of "big government," Great Society liberals, Clinton Democrats, and self-described progressives in this category. The view they all share is placing top priority on the maintenance of a pluralist political system, a market economy, and the existing political rules of the game. Civic education conservatives are not so much concerned with the ends of political decision-making as they are with the means. In relation to civic education, it is the integrity and stability of the political process that concerns them, not the policy outcomes. Thus they aim to promote a shared obligation among citizens to value the existing political system and to become involved with it in a manner that sustains and improves it. Towards those ends, the primary goals of civic education must be to preserve "civil society" and build "social capital."

"Why civil society? Why now?", asks Jean Elshtain, who defines it as "a sphere of associational life that is, yes, 'more' than families and 'less' than states . . . the many forms of community and association that dot the landscape of a democratic culture" (1998, 5).

Essentially, it is the network of organizations that allow a pluralist liberal democracy to function. John Patrick states that

> from a civil society perspective, what sustains political freedom is the widespread exercise of social and civic freedom by citizens, and the deep-rooted establishment of the values of freedom and self-reliance in a country. For these values to be strong, people must be able to make free choices and commitments reflecting their social and civic priorities. Democracy flourishes when the law effectively protects the right of people to associate with each other for general civic purposes and to organize groups representing their opinions, values, and interests (1996, 414).

Elshtain ultimately answers her own question by citing its crucial role in "citizen and neighbor creating" and "building and sustaining decent institutions." A better answer to her question, however, might be "fear." There is an insecurity among socioeconomic and political elites that an angry and alienated populace may, in a time of crisis, reach the what Kevin Phillips (1993) calls the "boiling point". As Susan Tolchin puts it,

> "Anger" has become the political watchword of the 1990s. Leaders from both parties worry about the absence of civility, the decline of intelligent dialogue, and the rising decibels of hate in political discourse. . . . A political form of bipolar disorder has emerged that is a symptom as well as a cause of anger. At peace for the first time in almost a century, Americans question the legitimacy of their own democracy. They are "mad as hell," and political leaders constantly ask why. (1996, 3)

In 1996, *Harper's Magazine* published the transcript of a symposium on the destabilizing impact of economic change; participants included its editor, a union economist, "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap (a notorious cost-cutting CEO), George Gilder, Robert Reich, and Edward Luttwak. Luttwak's comments were the most revealing:

> A society that is rich in GNP and poor in tranquillity ought to be thinking of ways to impede change, to secure and stabilize, not ways to increase change for the sake of efficiency. . . . If you inflict enough change on people, they bite back. . . . In this country, if you push people hard enough, you're going to get fascists in power. . . . As a citizen I would rather earn less, a little less, and be able to park my car without having to fear that I will be murdered. . . . Americans have already traded in their families for personal, individual advancement. So now, to come along and willfully subject them to added insecurity? They will come back at you. These people, who are the non-supertalented, the non-superacrobatic, the non-supersmart--what they're looking for is somebody who can answer their problems. And they will find him. (47)

Even if most civic education conservatives do not quite achieve Luttwak's levels of anxiety (I would not call it paranoia), they obviously share his concern with political

instability. That may explain why "analyzing and absorbing the end of a civil society has become one of Washington's most popular academic pursuits," which has resulted in the proliferation of elite study commissions with impeccably centrist and mainstream credentials. Among them are the Council on Civil Society, composed of Senators Dan Coats (R-IN) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), as well as Francis Fukuyama, Cornel West and twenty others, and a National Commission on Civic Renewal, "a high-powered panel of academics, business executives, and Washington insiders" chaired by William Bennett and Sam Nunn (*Boston Globe* 25 June 98). Both have issued reports bemoaning the state of civil society and urging Americans to become more involved in public life, especially by joining civic groups and neighborhood organizations. The Center for Civic Education, financed in part by the Pew Charitable Trusts and supported by the U. S. Department of Education, has become the primary research organization in that area.

A stronger civil society is seen to benefit the system at least in part by building up the supply of "social capital," defined by Robert Putnam (1995, 664-665) as the "features of social life--networks, norms, and trust--that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" that benefit the society. Putnam's contention that social capital was declining became widely publicized due to his clever use of a homely "bowling alone" metaphor, and by placing the blame on television. This turned out to be a sure-fire formula for media attention, and fit in well with the conservative concern about the decline of civil society.

As a result of approval by mainstream political and intellectual elites, financial support, and media attention, the conservative perspective has become the "politically correct" context of defining the problems and developing their solutions across all ideological boundaries. From the political right, William Schambra sees a "new strategy for American conservatism" in the call for a "new citizenship. . .which would empower families to take back their schools and neighborhoods . . . rolling back the incursions of the therapeutic state into the everyday lives of Americans." This is a crucial goal since

"the central project of the modern progressive liberal state is to eradicate civil society" (1995, 101 ff). From the perspective of free market enthusiasts, Henton, Melville, and Walesh see the "civic entrepreneur" as a "new type of leader [who] combines two important American traditions: entrepreneurship--the spirit of enterprise--and civic virtue--the spirit of community." These individuals are busy "rebuilding civil society from the grassroots" by building collaborative networks to promote economic change, enabling capitalism and democracy to move ahead together (1997, 149 ff).

Firmly in the middle of the road is former Senator Bill Bradley, who sees "deterioration of our civil society and the need to revitalize our democratic process" as "America's central problems." He defines civil society as "a space in which the bonds of community can flourish," and sees its "crucible" as the American family. To strengthen it, he argues that "we must recouple sex and parental responsibility . . . in part by holding men equally accountable for out of wedlock births." This he proposes to do in part by warning young men that "if you have sex with someone and she becomes pregnant, be prepared to have 15 percent of your wages for 18 years go to support the mother and child." Perhaps more effectively, he calls for more "civic space" in the public schools, a more "civic-minded" entertainment media, campaign finance reform, and a lessening of "rights talk" in the civic culture (1995, 94 ff).

Some "strong democrats", who probably see themselves as progressives, use much the same language. According to Benjamin Barber, civil society is the victim of corporate expansion as well as of government, whose response to corporate expansion "inadvertently encroached on and crushed civil society from the opposite direction." Civil society thus vanished "sometime between the two Roosevelts," and "its denizens were compelled either to find sanctuary under the feudal tutelage of big government or to join the private sector." Barber cites William Bennett's *Book of Virtues*, noting that "the virtues it celebrates are the product of neither government nor markets, but of families and citizens acting in the free space of civil society" (1995, 114-118).

The conservative perspective on civic education has thus managed to forge a strong, well-financed, and highly prominent coalition drawing on right, center, and left in American political life to promote an agenda based on strengthening civil society. From this standpoint, what civic education needs to teach is "civility" in personal behavior, a willingness to subordinate one's self-interest for the common good, and a working knowledge and appreciation of the pluralist virtues of the American political system.

Civility has become the watchword of civic education conservatives, and generally is used to mean self-control and common courtesy in social situations. Benjamin Barber, giving the concept a participatory democratic emphasis, sees this as a critical pedagogical need:

> At the most elementary level, what our children suffer from most, whether they're hurling racial epithets from fraternity porches or shooting one another down in schoolyards, is the absence of civility. . . . Civility is a work of the imagination, for it is through the imagination that we render others sufficiently like oursleves for them to become subjects of tolerance and respect, if not always affection. . . . Education creates a ruling aristocracy constrained by temperance and wisdom; when that education is public and universal, it is an aristrocracy to which all can belong. (1993, 44)

Related to this is the ability to put our own selfish interests behind us for the good of the community as a whole. In that context, John Goodlad, like most other civic education conservatives, attacks what he sees as "identity politics":

> The current problem of the American democracy is that of coping with a virtual explosion of individuals and collectives seeking to define their identity for themselves in the face of the realization that those in power over the years have been defining it for them. This drive . . . has been accompanied also by a narcissistic obsession with self that has both hurt just causes and strained community. With the public interest being constantly redefined to accommodate diversity, the core of common vision shrinks . . . For education to undergird the renewal of both political and social democracy, it must transcend the divisions in philosophical and religious persuasion that exist in a diverse population and reach for some higher and more universal meaning of human existence. (1995, 92)

Similarly, Jerry Chance sees the "ideal behaviors of democratic citizens" as including a "voluntary restraint on their self-interests . . . informed resistance to demagoguery and perversions of power and office . . . [and] participat[ing] constructively in the society with a judicious combination of positive action and forbearances." In this

light, he is particularly critical of demands for "equality of result," the "societal fragmentation" that came out of the 1960's, and multicultural education (1993, 159-160).

Finally, civic education must teach a willingness to negotiate, bargain, and compromise in politics, and show how the American political system can work to accommodate demands for change if the rules of the game are followed. Secretary of Education Richard Riley praises as a "highly acclaimed" example the framework in *National Standards for Civic Education*, developed by the Center for Civic Education (1997, 6). In the section on standards for high school students, it presents an elaborately detailed list of facts students need to know about American politics and government. Among them are an understanding of the importance of civil society for maintaining limited government, the distinction between public and private life, and the significance of civic virtue and the common good in republican government. Students are also to learn that the American political system is characterized by a value consensus on social equality, with the "notable exceptions" of slavery, the treatment of Native Americans, and discrimination against "various groups". It is also characterized by a low intensity of political conflict, with "notable exceptions such as the Civil War, nineteenth century labor unrest, the 1950s and 1960s civil rights struggles, and the opposition to the war in Vietnam" (1994, 89 ff).

The APSA Civic Education Task Force mission statement strikes the same note, calling for the teaching of "central truths about the nature of political life", namely that "the slow and patient building of first coalitions and then majorities can generate social change," and that we cannot be impatient "with political compromises, with the half-measures and imperfect solutions that are the stuff of politics" (Carter and Elshtain 1997, 145).

Judging from all this, civic education conservatives must indeed be an anxiety-ridden group. They evidently perceive the American political system as threatened by a growing mob of ill-informed, uncivil, and hot-headed folk, who need only some kind of

political catalyst to set them off. Thus, civic education is to be a protective Great Wall of mainstream historical understanding and good manners to guard the system against barbarian incursions.

The prevalence and high profile of the conservative point of view would seem to settle the matter once and for all, and perhaps in a political sense it has done just that. But in the context of an intellectually honest social scientific analysis, the issue is wide open because there are serious conceptual flaws in the intellectual building blocks of civic education conservatism.

Some critics point out that conservatives, in their unstinting praise of civil society, have forgotten what they ought to have read in *Federalist number 10.* Sherri Berman argues that "civil society activity often serves to fragment, rather than unite a society, accentuating and deepening already existing cleavages." The "neo-Tocquevillians" avoid this issue by "prais[ing] the groups they favor and denigrat[ing] those they do not" (1997, 565-566). She cites Putnam's work on Italy as an example of this. James Schmidt believes that "the meaning of 'civil society' tends to be rather elusive":

> Opponents of authoritarian regimes employ the term to denote something like the rights and liberties long associated with liberal democracies. Radical democrats use it to denote the ideal of an engaged, active citizenry, directly involved in public deliberation. For libertarians, it designates a market society, free from political coercion. For communitarians, it evokes the network of voluntary associations and the civic virtues they engender. (1998, 414)

Foley and Edwards similarly criticize the "lack of clarity" in most discussions of civil society, and see the notion of social capital as "generally undertheorized and overgeneralized." They argue much as Berman does and cite *The Federalist Papers* to the effect that the proliferation of voluntary associations can have positive and negative effects on political stability. Finally, they see a wish for an "escape from politics" in much of the popular usage and some scholarly accounts of civil society, which "tend to suppress [its] conflictive character, seeking in society itself and in its inner workings the

resolution of conflicts that politics and the political system in other understandings are charged with settling or suppressing" (1997, 551).

The concept of social capital has come under similar attack. Francis Moore Lappe and Paul Du Bois argue that "in much of the conversation about social capital, we sense a longing to go backwards . . . So we would like not only to broaden and strengthen the popular meaning of social capital, grounding it firmly in the concept of agency. We would like to widen the discussion of social capital, stretching it to inlcude all aspects of our common problem-solving capacities. We would like to enlarge it far beyond any narrow association with civil society" (1997, 126).

If the critics are right, defining the meaning of these terms should not be conceded to the conservatives. David Kallick notes that one of the early analysts of the nature of civil society was Antonio Gramsci, who "was keenly sensitive to the power of cultural and nongovernmental forms of political work, and sought ways to mobilize that power to lead Italians to reject fascism." He notes that the phrase is now "being put forward [by Robert Putnam, among others] not as a revolutionary force, but as a stabilizing force . . . Suddenly, foundations, corporations, and even conservatives such as Newt Gingrich and Francis Fukuyama started talking about the need to restore civil society in America." He therefore suggests we should be wary of "the connection between civil society advocates and status quo politics" (1996, 2). S. M. Miller agrees: "Civil society has become the leading political mantra of the day because the singers of its praise hear so many different chords in it . . . The broader challenge is the image of civil society that will prevail. Will the developing civil society promote democracy, empower participation, foster social values, widen perspectives, decrease inequalities, produce a kindler, gentler society? Or will the American civil society become more self-centered, more nasty to the poor, more commercialized?" (1996, 6)

An honest statement of the conservative perspective on civic education would explicitly state its implicit ideological biases: (1) Civil society consists of associations

and groups *that are committed to liberal democratic values, the existing constitutional framework, and a capitalist market economy;* (2) The purpose of strengthening civil society is to *promote political stability by encouraging negotiation, bargaining, compromise, and incremental change;* and (3) Social capital is a set of attitudes and values that are *consistent with and supportive of the existing political and economic system.*

Explicit statements of this kind are not made because civic education conservatives take for granted there is a nearly universal societal consensus supporting them. If we all agree that pluralist liberal democracy in combination with a market economy works in the common interest, and that civic education must be geared toward sustaining this system, there is no need to continually restate the obvious.

But to others concerned with the state of civic education, agreement may not be so obvious. Perhaps the problem is a dysfunctional system rather than dysfunctional citizens. Perhaps nonparticipation, incivility, and even a little rage may be legitimate, if not especially constructive responses to an illegitimate political process. And perhaps the version of history and politics favored by civic education conservatives is inaccurate--the "notable exceptions" may in fact be the rule.

Even if not, any serious program of civic education needs to be based on an explicit statement of societal goals. We need to make a clear choice of direction before we discuss how to get there. If we value the existing system and feel that all it needs is reform and stronger public awareness and involvement to make it work better, then the conservative program for civic education makes perfect sense. If on the other hand we see the problems of the existing system as symptoms of a deeper ailment requiring the cure of total reconstruction, civic education must take a different, transformative path.

A transformative perspective is characterized by a specific commitment to a Deweyan concept of democracy as an all-encompassing way of life, a more egalitarian social and economic system, and what might be called "the richness of difference" in

gender, race, and ethnicity. Civic education must therefore be explicitly oriented towards teaching students how to search for a better way--i.e., alternatives to the present political and economic system, which has failed to achieve these goals. There may or may not be some kind of common interest or value consensus that unites us, but it can only be determined through an ongoing and unending democratic debate. The specifics of a transformative perspective can be developed from two sources that complement each other in interesting ways: the idea of "social reconstruction" in progressive education, and contemporary feminist theory.

John Dewey's educational philosophy was the inspiration for the "social reconstructionists," an intellectually influential faction of the progressive education movement. Their ideas had little effect on the schools themselves, partly because of their academic rather than activist orientation, and partly because World War II and postwar anti-communist politics shut down the progressive education movement as a whole. The issues they raised, however, were widely discussed among educators at the time, and are still highly relevant to any discussion of civic education.

Dewey himself was part of this movement at the outset, but the actual leadership came from the lesser lights of progressive education: George S. Counts, Boyd Bode, Harold Rugg, Jesse Newlon, Theodore Brameld, and others. Using Dewey's ideas about education and democracy as their starting point, they adopted a neo-Marxist historical determinism in their vision of the future, as expressed by the editors in the October 1934 premier issue of their monthly magazine, *The Social Frontier:*

> *The Social Frontier* assumes that the age of individualism in economy is closing and the age marked by close integration of social life and by collective planning and control is opening. For weal or woe it accepts as irrevocable this deliverance of the historical process. It intends to move forward to meet the new age and to proceed as rationally as possible to the realization of all possibilities for the enrichment and refinement of human life (4).

Dewey agreed, and argued that the educational system had to make a choice:

> I do not think . . . that the schools can in any literal sense be the builders of a new social order. But the schools will surely, as a matter of fact and not of ideal, share in the building of the social order of the future according as they ally themselves with this or that movement of existing social forces. This fact is inevitable. The schools of America have furthered the present social drift and chaos by their emphasis upon an economic form of success which is intrinsically pecuniary and egotistic. They will of necessity take an active part in determining the social order--or disorder--of the future (1934, 11-12).

Neutrality was therefore out of the question. In January 1935, the editors published a lengthy statement of their position, which included the following:

> *The Social Frontier* finds [untenable] the view that the school should confine itself to a purely objective description and analysis of social life and to the equipment of the individual with the tools and methods of thought. The school in order to function in some social setting must have some social orientation--even though it be toward the past, some values--even though they represent the interests of a narrow class, some conception of human welfare--even though it be unenlightened and partial. These things are implicit in the nature of education, when conceived in organic fullness (30).

This statement, however, is not logically contingent on the claim that a collectivist future is inevitable--or, for that matter, on the similar and currently fashionable claim made for capitalism. Whether a particular society is the "end of history" or not, a conscious choice of historical perspective and political allegiance has to be made. Their choice was to take an explicit stand in favor of social reconstruction toward a democratic and egalitarian future. This entailed some ambitious objectives. In 1932, George S. Counts had started the debate with a pamphlet entitled "Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?"; in 1939, he published an essay entitled "The Schools Can Teach Democracy":

> The central part of any program in defense of democracy, therefore, must be an honest and vigorous effort to apply [democratic] ideas, values, and outlooks to our life and institutions--to bring economic power under popular control, to release the energies of technology, to root out every kind of special privilege and corruption, to promote toleration, understanding, and brotherhood among races, peoples, and religions, to conduct an unrelenting war on poverty and human misery, to guard civil rights and liberties as a priceless heritage, to prosecute the free and untrammeled search for knowledge in all fields, and to engage positively in the creation of a civilization of justice, beauty, humanity, and grandeur. . . . In the achievement of [this program], the school, and particularly the public school, must play an important role (13-14).

Expressions of this kind were the source of a debate that went on throughout the short life of the movement, and which was "at the core of a long-running conversation in *The Social Frontier*". If civic education is to have the explicit purpose of social

reconstruction, "Does this mean all education must be some form of indoctrination? Is any attempt to influence, direct, impose, guide, or direct the educated about some point of view about the nature of the good life . . . an instance of manipulation? Does this present a conflict between the methods we use and the ends we seek? Is the idea of democratic education inherently biased?" (Giarelli 1995, 33). The positions taken were not clear-cut, either-or choices, but much more complex and nuanced, and occasionally self-contradictory. Boyd Bode, for example, insisted that the schools' silence on the subject of social reconstruction "is equivalent, under the circumstances, to giving aid and comfort to the forces of tradition." However, "the whole business of [reconstructing beliefs and attitudes] becomes hypocrisy if it is decided in advance which conclusions are to be reached." He asserted that the point of progressive education is "not to prescribe beliefs, but to specify the areas in which a reconstruction or reinterpretation is needed" and provide "the conditions for sincere and careful thinking" (1935, 18-22). Jesse Newlon, on the other hand, had fewer reservations: "All education involves moulding of the individual. Education seeks to change the individual, to modify his behavior in important respects. . . . Indoctrination . . . is avoided when the whole process is lifted to the level of consciousness and understanding on the part of the teacher and increasingly on the part of the learner" (1939, 102).

What is significant and useful about this debate is that it raised precisely the right questions on the subject of civic education, which apply to either a conservative or transformative perspective. In some respects, one can step back and see that their own discussions offer an answer to that question: civic education toward a common social purpose need not close off dissent and disagreement; indeed, it can stimulate it. But it also requires a commitment to intellectual openness and honesty which may be hard to maintain. As the movement died, so did the debate. If we are to formulate a coherent strategy for civic education, especially if the goal is to improve or change society, it needs to be reopened.

What the social reconstructionists left out of the debate was a consideration of the place of social conflict in the educational process. Their conviction that we were moving inevitably towards a new age, and their rather rigid and exclusive class analysis of society, blinded them to that obligation. And insofar as they were white, middle-class males at a time when issues of race, gender, and ethnicity were below the horizon even for most self-styled progressives, any discussion of social and cultural differences was rendered highly unlikely, although they gave lip service to "tolerance". Sixty years later, it is clear that an egalitarian and collectivist era is, to say the least, not on the short-term political agenda, and that any discussion of social change involves more than economics.

Dewey himself had problems with issues of diversity and conflict. Walter Feinberg quotes his biographer, Robert Westbrook, to that effect: "He wanted no atonal music in the repertoire of his cultural orchestra . . . Dewey insisted that there were core ideals in American nationalism which stood apart from the particular values of the country's composite cultures, had priority over them, and ought to shape the lives of all the groups in society" (1993, 200). Feinberg further points out that Dewey's concept of democracy tended towards the view "democracy could be made neat and tidy" and that he failed to recognize that "democracy should allow incommensurable views to be expressed while protecting less powerful voices . . . [it] must allow people to reject, at least for themselves, even what is desirable". Thus, "the work that remains is to examine critically Dewey's philosophy in order to seek a more adequate conception of democracy and its application to the modern age" (1993, 210, 215). This is being done primarily by contemporary feminist political theorists.

Feminist theory fills in the blanks left by the social reconstructionists in its discussions on the meaning of citizenship, which is of course the prime subject matter of civic education. Most civic education conservatives use it without any definition at all, apparently because to them it seems self-evident. They would probably agree with the one offered by the Center for Civic Education: citizenship is "legally recognized

membership in a self-governing community; confers full membership in a self-governing community; no degrees of citizenship or legally recognized states of inferior citizenship are tolerated; confers equal rights under the law; is not dependent on inherited, involuntary groupings such as race, ethnicity, or ancestral religion; [and] confers certain rights and privileges, e.g., the right to vote, to hold public office, to serve on juries" (1994, 127).

A mainstream approach to the particular qualities of democratic citizenship is offered by Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, who see it as "enlightened political engagement": "the capability of identifying and acting on political interests and the recognition of democratic principles and the rights of all citizens to express interests." This involves the "ability to understand and retain concrete political facts", "political attentiveness", "participation in difficult [i.e., time-consuming] political activities", regular voting, and tolerance. They concede that their model is open to challenge from those who view citizenship "within the context of race and ethnicity and racism in America", and from those "who question the legitimacy of the more conventional understanding of *political* and *public*, as well as challenge the notion of universal citizenship" (1996, chap. 2).

One might expect something additional from "strong democrats", but most do not offer much more. Benjamin Barber frames his discussion of "participatory citizenship" almost entirely in the context of his proposal for mandatory community service, but never quite says what he means by that phrase (1992, 230 ff). Reeher and Cammarano, in their edited volume *Education for Citizenship* (1997), describe a wide variety of programs for that purpose, but none of the authors go farther than defining it as active participation in civic life.

In regard to the meaning of citizenship, conservatism in civic education actually has two "wings", which Walter Parker accurately refers to as "traditionalist" and "progressive": "Traditionalists concentrate on knowledge of the republican system,

progressives on this plus deliberation on public issues, problem solving/community action that brings together people of various identities, and other forms of direct and deliberate participation in state matters as well as in the middle sector or 'civil society'" (1996, 112). Their collective purpose, however, is the same--maintenance of the existing political system. It is a difference on means, not ends.

Also evident in much of this literature is the idea that citizenship implies a commonality and a unity of purpose--a set of values and interests we all share, which in the process of democratic deliberation and active civic participation we can use to resolve our differences and move the nation ahead toward our common goals. In general, civic education conservatives are at the very least edgy and at most indignant about the assertion of racial, gender, ethnic, and social class identities, which they see as an obstacle to commonality. John Goodlad attempts to cloak this in the context of ironic humor, but his point is nonetheless clear:

> Diversity places great demands on tolerance, another democratic virtue. Just when I have become comfortable with the classical, I am confronted with modernism and postmodernism. Just as I am becoming accepting of the lifestyle next door to me, the two men propose marriage and the adoption of a child. The church and synagogue exist quite comfortable side by side in the community, but the mosque now rising toward the heavens is creating dissonance. . . Enough already. The freedom democracy seeks to cultivate and protect appears to be running ahead of the community that must nurture it (1997, 40-41).

Not all civic education conservatives apply their personal levels of comfort as a measure of what constitutes the values of good citizenship. Others are certainly more open to difference, but they also fall short in important ways when considering the meaning of citizenship. Parker criticizes what he calls the progressive wing for "minimizing social and cultural heterogeneity . . . the two wings share the narrow conception of unity and difference. This conception has only one viable approach to the unity/difference tension, only one tool at its disposal, and that is assimilation. Assimilation is thus built into the common sense of citizenship education as one of its bearing walls" (113).

This is precisely where feminist theory begins, and it offers a view of citizenship that is at the root of a transformative perspective.

"Citizenship has been one of the most contested categories of political analysis," says Kathleen Jones, noting that it is conventionally defined "as a particular type of action performed by people of a common political identity in a specific locale." That definition is seen by feminists as a "gendered" version that establishes a "masculinized" norm of citizenship. "If women's discourses, practices, and rituals of 'belonging to' were taken as paradigmatic," says Jones, "citizenship might be founded differently, and understood to be practiced in different locales" (1997, 1-2). Susan Douglas Franzosa argues that the masculinized concept of citizenship has "signified women's exclusion and invisibility" by relying on "encoded models for citizens based on generalizations about male experience and behavior" (1988, 275).

It is usually at this point that conservatives dismiss the feminist argument and shut off debate with accusations of "political correctness", "divisiveness", or on a more sophisticated level, "essentialism" in relation to male-female differences. These accusations are simplistic and ideologically self-serving. The core of the feminist argument is that citizenship is a form of community-oriented moral and ethical behavior that transcends all kinds of boundaries, including those among nation-states. Democratic citizenship is an interactive and evolving human relationship that involves feelings of "connectedness" and caring, not just a static legal condition, a body of historical knowledge, or civil behavior in social situations. It is therefore broadly inclusive, but this does not mean that differences are suppressed in the name of some vague "commonality". Rather, it must explicitly take into account and place a positive value on the different experiences, histories, and perspectives of a wide variety of people. This is a feminist definition because women's experiences--not their biological endowment--enable them at least potentially to perceive what most men cannot or will not: the importance of qualities such as caring, listening, empathy, connectedness, and emotional

commitment in human relationships, including citizenship. These are qualities that men have denigrated as "female-coded" and thus irrelevant to political life, but they are critical components of feminist definitions of citizenship (Mansbridge 1995).

David Sehr credits to feminist theory "three central, related themes . . . that should be integrated into any valid understanding of the essential components of a public democratic society: (1) the natural social connectedness and interdependence of individuals, and the need for an ethic of care and responsibility that corresponds to that interdependence; (2) reconceptualizing the relationship between the private sphere and the public sphere; and (3) equality for all in terms of economic, social, and political rights" (1997, 66). Each needs to be examined in some detail for a full understanding of feminist notions of citizenship.

Citizenship necessarily involves political relationships such as authority and power. Mainstream, i. e. masculinized, definitions generally stress impersonality, coercion, conflict, and position. These are obviously not irrelevant, but feminists argue that these exclude other possibilities--such as the ones cited by Sehr--that are based on the experience of women. Kathleen Jones offers a feminist idea of "compassionate" authority, connected to an ideal of justice and based on an "imaginative taking up of the position of the other": "Moving in the world 'as if' through other people's minds, hearts, and bodies, and seeing the world from other's perspectives, as much as that is possible, suggests that there are necessary connections between compassionate authority and concepts of justice . . . The 'rational' modes of speech taken to be constitutive of authority exclude certain critical human dimensions" (1996, 86, 90). This does not fit the male stereotype of feminine "softness" based on losing oneself in pity for a "victim"; rather, compassionate authority is "other-directed" without erasing the distinction between one's own needs and perspectives and those of someone else. "Compassion has the potential for humanizing authority", says Jones; authority without compassion, based on conventional definitions of the term, is inhuman.

Politics, too, feminists argue, needs to be seen from a perspective other than the conventional ones of power, conflict, and Weber's "boring of hard boards". Wendy Sarvasy uses the ideas and practices of female social service workers in the early part of this century as useful examples "for rethinking how the language of citizenship and democracy could be used to elaborate a vision of politics as centrally concerned with the nurturing of human life" (1997, 55). Jane Mansbridge reconceptualizes power in a democracy as "democratic persuasion": "The goal of democracies ought to be . . . to make the processes of persuasion as genuine as possible by reducing the degree to which they are influenced by force and the threat of sanction, and to make the processes of exercising power as derivative as possible from agreed procedures and as equal as possible among the members. Feminist insights into connection and domination must inform the use of both persuasion and power" (1995, 118-119).

Although civic education conservatives make distinctions between public and private life, they are never very clear about where that line is to be drawn, perhaps again because they assume there is a consensus on that subject. An early feminist slogan, of course, is "the personal is political". But even before that, C. Wright Mills wrote about the distinction between "personal troubles" and "public issues". A trouble is "a private matter [when] values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened"; issues "transcend these local environments . . . They have to do with the organization of many such milieus into the institutions of historical society as a whole." Among the latter, he includes unemployment, war, urban development, and marriage. "Insofar as the family as an institution turns women into darling little slaves and men into their chief providers and unweaned dependents," he says, "the problem of a satisfactory marriage remains incapable of purely private solution." (1959, 10). Feminist notions of citizenship similarly rely on a broad definition of what constitutes a public issue, based to a considerable extent on women's experiences in relation to the family. As Sarvasy puts it, "From the vantage point of the early feminist notion of social citizenship, it does not

contract the spaces for women's citizenship or to ignore the ways in which women's public lives require the intermeshing of the family, the administrative state, the neighborhood, the workplace, and the representative institutions" (1997, 65).

Above all, feminists argue, what conventional concepts of citizenship lack is a recognition of the real world of gender, racial, and economic inequality. A truly inclusive and participatory democracy must neither over- nor undervalue the expression of any particular group. The current social and economic structure does not allow for this, to say the least. As Nancy Fraser puts it, "Cultural differences can only be freely elaborated and democratically mediated on the basis of social equality" (1997, 107).

An egalitarian society based on deliberative democracy in which no one's position is "privileged" based on gender, race, or class will necessarily generate intense conflict. Commonality cannot be taken for granted, nor should any group be arbitrarily told to restrain itself toward that end. Civic education conservatives either reject this model for that reason, or, if they do favor greater participation, tend to avoid the issue. Walter Parker states, "By distancing matters of race, gender, and ethnicity from the central concerns of governmental and direct democracy, the progressives, like the traditionalists, are limited in their ability to advance contemporary thinking about the unity/difference tension." (1996, 113) Feminists, on the other hand, confront them directly and creatively.

Their basic argument is that the unity/difference debate has been caricatured and oversimplified by conservatives into an "either/or" choice--either we have a citizenry united by a common interest (with due respect to and tolerance for cultural differences) or we have divisive identity politics. Feminists respond that dissent and difference are positive and potentially constructive democratic values. Holloway Sparks defends the "dissenting practices" of activist women as examples of "an expanded conception of democratic citizenship that incorporates dissent, recognizes courage as central to democratic action, and reclaims and revalues the courageous dissident practices of women activists." This means that citizenship "involves more than deliberation"; it

includes "oppositional democratic practices that augment or replace institutionalized channels of democratic opposition when those channels are inadequate or unavailable" (1997, 75).

How then do we forge a coherent and workable democratic society? Feminists argue that democratic citizens must learn to step outside of themselves without losing themselves. We have to begin to see the point of view of the "other", not just in a detached, objective, academic (i.e. masculine) way, but in a personal, emotional, and empathetic way--without losing sight of who we are and what we stand for.

C. Wright Mills is again relevant here. Describing what he calls "the sociological imagination," he sees it as enabling its possessor "to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of individuals . . . The first fruit of this imagination--and the first lesson of social science that embodies it--is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances." This requires the intellectual equivalent of an out-of-body experience, and he means this beyond merely an academic exercise: "In many ways it is a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one" (1959, 5).

From a different vantage point and with different social priorities, feminists make a similar argument. The key to balancing diversity and unity lies in recognizing that our social and political identities are indeed critical to defining who we are and where we belong, but at the same time understanding that they are historical constructs that are constantly evolving as conditions change and as we come into contact with others. Identities are not demarcated by "iron curtains" that permanently separate us, but boundaries that are constantly shifting. They are real but not impermeable or immutable. Giving credit to "feminist discourse" for their insights, Guarasci and Cornwell state that "what is needed is a wholly different ideal of the democratic community in which both

difference *and* connection can be held together yet understood to be at times necessarily separate, paradoxical, and in contradiction to one another" (1997, 3).

Thus, Susan Bickford contends that "the language of 'identity' need not be regarded as inimical to democratic politics, as it is by many contemporary critics of identity politics." The concept of citizenship must not be used to erase differences, thus we need to find a concept that "would not automatically privilege certain commitments". The key, Bickford says, is to seek possible answers to the question, "In a context of inequality and oppression, how are multiple 'we's' to be democratically part of the same thing? What can make possible democratic communication with differentially placed others?" Part of the answer lies in a recognition that

> identity is a personal and political force open to active re-creation through our words and actions. . . . In this forging of identity, we connect with others and engage in collective work. I contend that this is an understanidng of what democratic citizenship is, and needs to be, in an inegalitarian or egalitarian context. The kinds of actors--conditioned and creative, situated but not static--are citizens. And these activities should be understood not simply as "feminist work" or "coalition politics" but as the practice, the performance of citizenship (1997, 117, 124-125).

As Ruth Lister describes it, this is a "dialectical" perspective on the subject of citizenship: "Our goal should be a universalism that stands in creative tension to diversity and difference and that challenges the divisions and exclusionary inequalities which can stem from diversity" (1997, 13). Our behavior as citizens might then be, as Jodi Dean describes it in a feminist context, a form of "reflective solidarity"--that is, knowing who we are but recognizing that this is constantly changing as we connect with and relate to others.

A transformative perspective on civic education, then, is based on two components: (1) an education system that is oriented toward developing egalitarian and participatory democracy and expanding human rights in all areas of social, political, and economic life; and (2) a notion of citizenship as membership in a community built on

interdependent human relationships, an ethic of caring for and about others, and placing a positive value on difference, diversity, and dissent.

A choice between a conservative and a transformative perspective, it has been argued, is critical for choosing the kind of civic education we want. If our goal is conservative, and we wish to teach young people civility, self-restraint, and the existing political rules of the game, our emphasis will have to be on knowledge and experience *that confirms the values and goals of the American political system as it is now constituted.* This is most certainly not to say that students should be taught that change is undesirable; rather, the orientation should be toward change within the limits of what the current system allows and that improves the functioning of the system. If our goal is transformative, the emphasis will have to be on knowledge and experience *that encourages a critical frame of mind toward the existing system and develops a readiness and ability to consider and actively work for alternatives.* This does not mean we should train revolutionaries, even if we could--it does mean explicitly broadening the options available for students to include the consideration of major social and economic changes. This implies two very different directions for a civic education curriculum, although there are areas that overlap.

In 1991, the Center for Civic Education published *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education.* The "Framework Development Committee" included Benjamin Barber, R. Freeman Butts, John Patrick, and sixteen other scholars and educators. It was Butts, a prestigious mainstream educational historian, who "made a greater contribution to *Civitas* than any other contributor" (viii). The foreword, written by Ernest Boyer, focuses specifically on the economic challenges facing America that require a framework for civic education. The result is a 650-page text listing in extensive and excruciating detail everything anyone ever wanted to know about civics. It starts with a discussion of civic virtue, offers rules for "competent and responsible participation", and continues with 300 pages on what students should learn about the nature of politics and government. It goes

on to describe the "fundamental values and principles" of U. S. government and politics: the public good, individual rights, justice, equality, diversity, truth, and patriotism. It offers a rather rigidly institutional curriculum on American political institutions, and concludes with a rights- and obligations-based concept of the "role of the citizen". In 1994, as mentioned earlier, the Center produced a set of national standards consistent with this approach that breaks down in a somewhat more readable and concise fashion the specific civic knowledge to be expected of each level of elementary and secondary education, somewhat in the spirit of E. D. Hirsch. On the basis of these texts, one might conclude that the ultimate goal of civic education conservatives is to wear students down with information about civic life until they no longer have the energy to make any major changes in the system.

But most civic educators also recommend participation as part of the curriculum, and it is community service that arouses the greatest enthusiasm among the conservatives. And indeed most community service projects do not lead in politically dangerous directions, otherwise they would not be so widely used in the criminal justice system. That said, community service is by no means an inherently conservative pedagogical tool. Everything depends on the particular kind of service educators have in mind, and lines between conservative and transformative examples cannot be neatly drawn. As Richard Battistoni puts it, "Service alone does not automatically lead to engaged citizenship; only if we consciously construct our programs with the education of democratic citizens--in the broadest sense--in mind can service learning be the vehicle by which we educate for citizenship" (1997, 49). Context is everything, and projects need to be judged in relation to the content of the courses of which they are part.

Thus John Goodlad's proposal for "internships" involving participation "in the local, state, or national infrastructure through planned, guided immersion in essential elements of it [i.e. service provision]" is consistent with his traditionalist point of view. The more progressive programs of community service are usually freer and more

challenging, but are often not clearly related to any political goal and therefore seem to be based on a faith that somehow they will stimulate civic participation by osmosis. Benjamin Barber asserts, "When sited in a learning environment, the service idea promotes an understanding of how self and community, private interest and public good, are necessarily linked" (1992, 249). He offers no details. Craig Rimmerman states that service proponents hope "that students who participate in service activities will begin to ask why tragedies such as illiteracy, hunger, and homelessness even exist. . . and begin to develop a social consciousness" (1997, 21). There is an apparent unwillingness, even among self-styled progressives, to commit to a particular political direction.

Thus civic education conservatives in general propose a thorough grounding in basic knowledge of what they believe to be the values of the political system (with perhaps some critical--but not too critical--analysis), and, as a supplement, an array of service activities that hopefully will stimulate further civic participation and greater awareness of social problems. If anything comes out of this kind of curriculum, it will most likely be a stronger acceptance of things as they are, perhaps combined with a readiness to involve oneself in mainstream political activities, interest groups, or community organizations. Ultimately, this can serve the purpose of shoring up system stability.

We cannot look directly to John Dewey for much in the way of specific guidelines as to the overall direction of a transformative civic education. As Robert Westbrook says, "Dewey himself, alas, had relatively little to say about the particulars of civic education, though most of what he had to say about 'democracy and education' is at least indirectly relevant" (1995, 138).

It might be more useful to look at Dewey's educational practices, which are the basis for contemporary reformers' ideas about democratic education, in combination with the ideas of feminist theorists. Thus, a transformative civic education curriculum would

combine schools that are themselves democratic with a pedagogy that encourages values and behaviors consistent with feminist notions of democratic citizenship.

David Sehr lists five "public democratic school practices": encouraging students to explore their interdependence with others and with nature, study social justice issues, discuss, debate, and act on public issues, critically evaluate their social reality, and develop participatory skills (1997, 89). These practices are only possible in schools that are themselves democratic and intimately connected to and involved with their communities, which is what Dewey proposed.

Dewey did not want schools to be a "place set apart in which to learn lessons," but a "genuine form of active community life . . . a miniature community, an embryonic society" (1943, 14, 18). This does not mean either a replica of the existing social order or a utopia. Rather, it means a place where "the experience gained by the child in a familiar, commonplace way is carried over and made use of there, and what the child learns in the school is carried back and applied in everyday life, making the school an organic whole, instead of a composite of isolated parts. The isolation of studies as well as of parts of the school system disappears" (1943, 91).

The point is to develop a curriculum that inspires students to analyze, evaluate, and ultimately improve their social experience. The classroom becomes a place where students can connect their own immediate environment to the world at large, within the framework of conventional academic disciplines. In that regard, the school should provide a model for democracy and the experience of the students should serve as the organizing principle for the curriculum. This philosophy has served as the basis for a number of well-known experimental educational programs today, including Eliot Wigginton's "Foxfire" project in Georgia, Deborah Meier's work in East Harlem, and George Wood's efforts in the Appalachian region of Ohio, among others.

There must also be an explicit value basis to this approach, and this is where the insights of feminist theory are useful. The democratic curriculum should be structured

around what Nel Noddings calls "an ethic of caring arising out of both ancient notions of agapism and contemporary feminism". There are many calls for teaching morality in the schools today, but she argues that we need "a more appropriate conception of morality . . . our forebears were right in establishing the education of a moral people as the primary aim of schooling, but they were often shortsighted and arrogant in their description of what it means to be moral" (1994, 173).

This is directly connected to dealing with difference. Guarasci and Cornwell credit feminism "for helping many of our students with breaking down the 'self-other' duality" and promoting "a wholly different ideal of the democratic community"--a "multicentric democracy in which the concept and experience of self and others are as connected as they are distinct and singular" (1997, 2-3).

A useful but now largely forgotten example of this approach can be found in the publications of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association (EPC). In the 1930s and early 1940s, the EPC issued a series of reports and books on the scope and methods of education for democracy. A specific curriculum case book, entitled *Learning the Ways of Democracy,* appeared in 1940. Its prescriptions and examples present a model of transformative civic education that has lost none of its relevance sixty years later--indeed, it seems far more modern, fresh, and appropriate to the needs of twenty-first century America than the tedious and tiresome conventionality of *Civitas,* or the cautious incrementalism of the APSA Civic Education Mission Statement.

Learning the Ways of Democracy offers a curriculum that fits four important criteria of transformative civic education: (1) an explicit connection between democracy and social justice; (2) a pedagogical approach that is interdisciplinary and comparative, and based on asking open-ended questions on highly controversial subjects; (3) an emphasis on cooperative student planning and participation; and (4) a service orientation

that is directly connected to the needs of the community and, most importantly, is not afraid to be "political" by confronting difficult issues.

Social justice goals are the "hallmarks of democratic education", according to the report. These include "the welfare of people outside [students'] face-to-face groups, and particularly for people less fortunate than themselves or less able to act in their own behalf", equal educational opportunity, civil liberties, "the right to share in determining the purposes and policies of education", and democratic methods in all areas of the educational process. It specifically states that "to speak of liberties without reference to the economic necessities of life, to speak of democracy without reference to political institutions, is, as Charles A. Beard has said, 'to speak of shadows without substance'" (35-36). Democracy, it is argued, must not be narrowly and exclusively defined in terms of political institutions; rather, "The better practices extend the democratic concept beyond the political into every phase of our social existence" (58).

The disciplinary boundaries of a democratic civic education thus also require extension--or elimination. Civic education should not be obstructed by arbitrary limitations on the intellectual directions taken. Perhaps the most refreshingly subversive aspect of the EPC curriculum is its reliance on questions rather than answers. The *Civitas* standards all begin with "students are to know . . . ", followed by a list of apparently undisputed facts. The EPC curriculum favors courses like "What is the American Tradition?", whose outline is based on questions such as "Is it democratic?" "Is it individualistic or cooperative?" "Is it tolerant?", and "Is it progressive?". Comparative approaches are favored in that context, such as the "modern problems" course at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, Iowa, titled "Democracy and Its Competitors". The course compared democracy, Nazism, fascism, and "sovietism", and then examined "obstacles and threats to democracy" such as war, corruption in government, unemployment, crime, race prejudice, inadequate health services, maldistribution of wealth, waste of natural resources, and poor housing (55). Disciplinary boundaries are to

be crossed: "It would seem appropriate for schools sincerely concerned about civic education to make a general and coordinated approach to the study of democracy and democratic citizenship on the entire curriculum front" (119). Thus a class in Shaker Heights, Ohio, combined English and social studies in a course entitled "The American Scene". Ultimately, the students planned and organized a unit on American drama "to broaden our understanding of the American way of life" (155-156). In the same school, a geometry class learned "to think logically" by discussing a proposed child labor amendment to the Constitution (164).

Transformative civic education requires a willingness to confront controversial issues in relation to events in the community itself. Thus, an Omaha high school discussed a leaflet distributed locally that took the Soviet point of view in the 1940 Russo-Finnish War; a social studies class in Newton, Mass. discussed the free speech rights of radicals based on a local press report of communist infiltration of a peace organization; and in Des Moines, a city-wide student symposium was set up to debate the question, "Is there anything we students can do to keep the United States out of the war?" (172ff, 290). A particularly interesting example is that of a Moultrie, Georgia, high school class that studied "the race problem" in relation to "the South as the Nation's Number One Economic Problem". Although "the need for race tolerance was not a 'felt need' on the part of some students", the outcome was that some of the most "prejudiced" students were "convinced . . . that Negroes could make progress if given a chance". For Georgia in 1938, this was not a trivial accomplishment.

In a less cautious mode, students at Benjamin Franklin High School, in what was then an interracial East Harlem neighborhood, did a direct study of race, again with a syllabus that posed questions rather than listing answers: Is there a pure race? Are some groups more advanced and intelligent than others? Why does a nation consider itself superior? (163)

Most of these courses and projects involved direct student participation and planning in a cooperative context. A number of field trips are described in which the students themselves decided on the educational objectives and itinerary--in sharp contrast to the way field trips are often planned in schools today, even in college. A striking example of student involvement is described in a Sacramento, California high school, where "a third-year social problems class invited the principal of a school to talk with them about a proposal, initiated by students, to include an elective course in sex education in the school curriculum." The transcript of the discussion indicates remarkable receptivity from the principal, although it is not clear what decision was ultimately made (178).

Finally, the EPC report is filled with examples of students collectively taking direct action to solve community problems. Community service in a transformative context is not just a lone student going off for a few weeks to a social service agency to feel good about himself or herself, or perhaps by accident to find a social conscience. The point is to learn how to organize to change things.

Thus the EPC report lists, among others, the following projects: a student housing survey and discussions with landlords about improving East Harlem housing conditions; pressuring local government for more and better playgrounds in Radford, Virginia; ninth graders, also in Radford, promoting public health measures as an outgrowth of a study of venereal diseases; a survey of living standards in Framingham, Mass.; a rural school in Ypsilanti, Michigan, becoming a community center run and organized by the students; eradication of malaria mosquitoes in Georgia; and a high school in Holtville, Alabama, whose objective became "to improve the living conditions--economic, social, and recreational--in this rural community." (322)

The EPC concludes that there are two particular types of community service that fulfill the criteria for democratic civic education: activities which school youth help to plan and execute, sharing responsibility with adults, and those which students initiate,

plan, and take responsibility for carrying out themselves with adult assistance. These tie in with the EPC's criteria for such projects in general: the problems directly affect the students involved, the participants are able to do something about the problems, the participants are guided by democratic values in making their decisions, and there are demonstrable social benefits resulting from the action taken (326-327). In other words, students are educated to learn how to create social change, not just observe it.

The report admits that the examples it presents are uncommon; but they are probably even less common today. But some do exist. An example is provided by Kathleen Jones (1997a, 13 ff.), who writes about one of her students, a feminist activist who was brutally murdered by her abusive boyfriend, who ultimately committed suicide in jail. The event traumatized many on the campus; the obvious question was how a militant feminist could herself become a victim. The ultimate response of faculty and students was to transform the tragedy into a basis for civic education. Students and faculty organized a "Take Back the Night" march, worked for the establishment of a campus task force to identify measures to reduce the risk of violence, and participated in a community-based research project on providing services for women victims of violence. As Jones puts it, "The involvement of students in these projects has given them along with the faculty and staff a way beyond privatized grief toward research, action, and political connection. This involvement represents one way to construct a political future." (26) This is a useful contemporary example of what the Educational Policies Commission recommended in 1940: teach students that politics exists to solve the problems they face every day in their own communities, and let them plan cooperatively and democratically how to use politics to deal with them. That is the heart of a transformative civic education.

The basic argument of this paper is that advocates of civic education need to make a conscious choice of political direction, which up to now has largely been avoided. Although there are differences on the relative usefulness of different methods

of civic education, there is an implicit consensus on the conservative goal of maintaining the existing system with, at best, a few incremental improvements. That consensus exists only because the ideological mainstream has taken possession of the issue and has imposed its own definitions of relevant concepts. An honest decision about civic education, however, requires a consideration of all alternatives, even those not particularly favorable to established, "politically correct" conservative interests. Indeed, that is the basis of any intellectually honest curriculum in civic education.

Therefore, if a choice is going to be made, and if we are to decide what makes sense in civic education on any level, including higher education, let us consider all the options, and discuss ends before we discuss means. In that light, I would argue for a transformative curriculum. There is certainly a basis for the fears of civic education conservatives. People are indeed alienated, impatient, and angry about the political and economic system, and there is a potential for a destructive and anti-democratic political response to a future crisis. However, that may say more about the quality of our system rather than the quality of our citizens. What is more, the political history of the United States indicates that, if anything, it has been average citizens who usually exerted pressure for greater democracy over the stiff resistance of the societal elites. Anti-democratic movements in America, whatever their ultimate popularity among the mass public, generally have had their origins in the upper classes of society; McCarthyism is a notable example. If we are to have a democratic future, I would therefore prefer to rely on and further develop the democratic instincts of average citizens, rather than on the cautious, defensive, and ultimately self-serving civic education programs of those who consider themselves to be our political and intellectual leaders.

SOURCES

Barber, Benjamin. 1984. *Strong Democracy.* Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California.

_____. 1992. *An Aristocracy of Everyone.* New York: Ballantine

_____. 1993. "America Skips School". *Harper's Magazine,* November.

Battistoni, Richard M. 1985. *Public Schooling and the Education of Democratic Citizens.* Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil Society and Political Institutionalization." *American Behavioral Scientist* 40: 562-574.

Bickford, Susan. 1997. "Anti-Anti-Identity Politics: Feminism, Democracy, and the Complexities of Citizenship." *Hypatia* 12: 111-131.

Bode, Boyd H. 1935. "Education and Social Reconstruction." *The Social Frontier,* January.

Bradley, Bill. 1995. "America's Challenge: Revitalizing Our National Community." *National Civic Review* 84: 94-100.

Carter, Lief H., and Jean Bethke Elshtain. 1997. "Task Force on Civic Education Statement of Purpose." *PS:Political Science and Politics* 30: 745.

Center for Civic Education. 1991. *Civitas.* Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education.

_____. 1994. *National Standards for Civics and Government.* Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education.

Chance, Jerry M. 1993. "On the Development of Democratic Citizens." *The Social Studies,* July/August.

Counts, George S. 1939. *The Schools Can Teach Democracy.* New York: John Day.

Dean, Jodi. 1997. The Reflective Solidarity of Democratic Feminism. In Jodi Dean, ed. *Feminism and the New Democracy.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dewey, John. 1934. "Can Education Share in Social Reconstruction." *The Social*

Frontier, October.

_____. 1943. *The School and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Educational Policies Commission. 1940. *Learning the Ways of Democracy.* Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. 1992. "Teaching for Democracy." *Liberal Education,* May/June.

_____. 1995. *Democracy on Trial.* New York: Basic.

_____. 1998. "Civil Society." *Liberal Education,* Winter.

Feinberg, Walter. 1993. "Dewey and Democracy at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century." *Educational Theory* 43: 195-216.

Foley, Michael, and Bob Edwards. 1997. "Editor's Introduction." *American Behavioral Scientist* 40: 550-561.

Franzosa, Susan Douglas. 1988. "Schooling Women in Citizenship." *Theory Into Practice* 27: 275-281.

Fraser, Nancy. 1997. Equality, Difference, and Democracy: Recent Feminist Debates in the United States. In Jodi Dean, ed., *Feminism and the New Democracy.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Giarelli, James M. 1995. The Social Frontier 1934-1943: Retrospect and Prospect. In Michael James, ed. *Social Reconstruction Through Education.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Goodlad, John I. 1995. Democracy, Education, and Community. In Roger Soder, ed., *Democracy, Education, and the Schools.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

_____. 1997. *In Praise of Education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Greider, William. 1992. *Who Will Tell the People?* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Guarasci, Richard, and Grant H. Cornwell. 1997. Democracy and Difference. In Guarasci and Cornwell, eds., *Democratic Education in an Age of Difference.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Henton, Douglas; John Melville; and Kimberly Walesh. 1997. "The Age of the Civic Entrepreneur: Restoring Civil Society and Building Economic Community." *National Civic Review* 86: 149-156.

Hudson, William. 1995. *American Democracy in Peril.* Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Jones, Kathleen B. 1996. What is Authority's Gender? In Nancy Hirschmann and Christine DiStefano, eds., *Revisioning the Political.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

_____. 1997. "Introduction". *Hypatia* 12: 1-5.

_____. 1997a. The Politics of Responsibility and Perspectives on Violence Against Women. In Jodi Dean, *Feminism and the New Democracy.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kallick, David. 1996. "Why Civil Society?" *Social Policy* (Summer), 2-3.

Lappe, Frances Moore, and Paul Martin DuBois. 1997. "Building Social Capital Without Looking Backward." *National Civic Review* 86: 119-128.

Lasch, Christopher. 1995. *The Revolt of the Elites.* New York: Norton.

Lister, Ruth. 1997. "Dialectics of Citizenship." *Hypatia* 12: 6-26.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1995. Reconstructing Democracy. In Nancy Hirschmann and Christine DiStefano, *Revisioning the Political.* Westview

Miller, S. M. 1996. "Building a Progressive Civil Society." *Social Policy,* Winter.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination.* New York: Oxford.

Newlon, Jesse H. 1939. *Education for Democracy in Our Time.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Nie, Norman H.; Jane Junn; and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry. 1996. *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Noddings, Nel. 1994. An Ethic of Caring and Its Implications for Instructional Arrangements. In Lynda Stone, ed., *The Education Feminism Reader.* New York: Routledge.

Parker, Walter C. 1996. "'Advanced' Ideas About Democracy: Toward a Pluralist Conception of Citizen Education." *Teachers College Record* 98: 104-125.

Patrick, John J. 1996. "Civil Society in Democracy's Third Wave." *Social Education* 60: 414-417.

Phillips, Kevin. 1993. *Boiling Point.* New York: Harper.

Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 28: 664-682.

Reeher, Grant, and Joseph Cammarano. 1997. *Education for Citizenship.* New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Riley, Richard. 1997. "The Importance of Civic Education." *Teaching K-8,* February.

Sarvasy, Wendy. 1997. "Social Citizenship From a Feminist Perspective." *Hypatia* 12: 54-73.

Schambra, William A. 1995. "By the People: The Old Values of the New Citizenship." *National Civic Review* 84: 101-118.

Schmidt, James. 1998. "Civility, Enlightenment, and Society." *American Political Science Review* 92: 419-427.

Sehr, David T. 1997. *Education for Public Democracy.* Albany, NY: SUNY

Sparks, Holloway. 1997. "Dissident Citizenship: Democratic Theory, Political Courage, and Activist Women." *Hypatia* 12: 74-110.

Tolchin, Susan. 1996. *The Angry American.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Westbrook, Robert B. 1995. Public Schooling and American Democracy. In Roger Soder, ed., *Democracy, Citizenship, and the Schools.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.